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### The Mystery of Suicide among Women Writers.

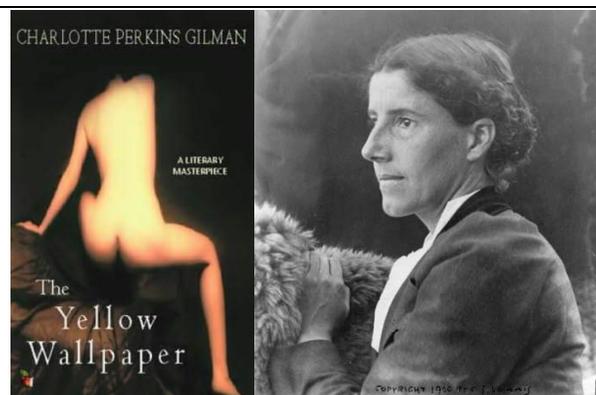
In the 19th and 20th century, a lot of women writers committed suicide. Since they were all living through the creation of stories and poems, we can be tempted to look for a link between these curious voluntary deaths. A few investigations have been made about this popular issue among women writers and most of the researchers have come up with the hypothesis that creativity was a cause of insanity, and that suicide was also a way to escape the patriarchy and finally to be free. In this paper, I will analyze briefly both hypotheses about what lead women writers to commit the irreparable act of killing themselves.

Obviously, there are some reasons that could lead a person to make the choice of taking his own life such as suffering from an incurable illness. That was actually the case of Charlotte Perkins Gillman in 1935 who took an overdose of chloroform to escape the suffering of incurable breast cancer diagnosed 3 years earlier. However, there are a lot of women writers who committed suicides for unknown reasons. Some researchers have come up with the idea that creativity could be a cause of insanity. In fact, a lot of creative people in different domains such as painters, writers, comedians, have decided to kill themselves in past generations. The idea that creativity could be related to mental illness was first treated by Aristotle in one of his philosophical works. Afterwards, researchers said that creative people were more likely to have mental illness such as depression,

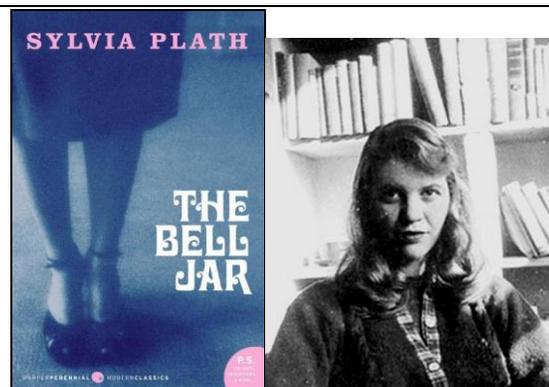
mood disorders, or have bipolar tendencies, etc. Another possible reason for suicide among women writers is the fact that it could be a way for women of that time to escape the patriarchy and to be free. Indeed, this theme was described in a few works by Sylvia Plath and Kate Chopin such as “The bell jar” and “Awakening”. In fact, in these stories, the two authors say that they were not free but that they shouldn’t have to die in order to live. In their time, women were really trapped by patriarchy which confined them in a society where they had no control, and limited choices, where they were not considered by man at all. In her short story called “The Yellow wallpaper”, Charlotte Perkins Gilman treated the subject of women’s imprisonment in patriarchy by creating a scenario of a woman going insane and tearing down the wallpaper in the room of the domestic place as a symbol of tearing down the patriarchy. In fact, it is obvious to notice the importance of patriarchy in this story by analyzing the behavior of the woman character’s husband. Indeed, her husband really treated her like a child by calling her little girl, darling, and silly goose. He also gives no importance to her illness saying her not to use her imagination and suggesting the rest cure to get better. This story is really representative of men’s empowerment over women in the patriarchal period. In brief, suicide among women writers could also have been an ethico-political choice due to a fascination towards freedom and a dream to escape from the patriarchy.

To conclude, we can say that there could have been many reasons why women writers committed suicide in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries such as a way to access freedom, being liberated from the suffering of illness, and a choice due to a mental illness sometimes present in creative people’s lives. Moreover, the presence of women’s dreams are often presented in their writing as being ways to access liberty, something they didn’t

get without fighting for a long time. Since actions sometimes speak louder than words, and that women were silenced subjects in these generations, could we say that suicide was also used as a way to express anger, fear, and disagreement? Did suicide among women writers really change anything? In fact, it certainly affected the way we are proud to be women in our day and opened our eyes to the fact that our fights for freedom has made us stronger and more equal human beings.



*“The Yellow Wallpaper” By Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1891*



*“The Bell Jar” By Sylvia Plath 1963*